



# Focus

## Emergency Spill Response in Washington State

### Overview

The Department of Ecology responds to emergency incidents involving releases and spills of oil and hazardous materials that have the potential to harm the natural environment and affect public health. Spill response teams based in Olympia, Seattle, Spokane and Yakima make up a dedicated group of professionals who provide 24-hour, year-round response service. In addition, Ecology is the state designated on-scene coordinator whenever oil is spilled to water.

#### Typical types of emergency incidents:

- ◆ Oil spills
- ◆ Hazardous material releases
- ◆ Clandestine drug labs
- ◆ Abandoned drums and cylinders
- ◆ Illegal "midnight" dumps
- ◆ Leaking storage tanks
- ◆ Fish kills

### How is an Ecology response initiated?

Under state law, Ecology must be notified when any amount of regulated waste or hazardous material that poses an imminent threat to life, health or the environment is released to the air, land or water, or whenever oil is spilled on land or to waters of the state. The spiller is always responsible for reporting a spill. Failure to report a spill in a timely manner may result in enforcement actions. If you are not responsible for a spill, making the initial notification does not make you liable for the spill. However, please consult with Ecology's response team before attempting any type of response or cleanup.

### How is spill notification made?

If oil or hazardous materials are spilled to state waters, the spiller must notify both federal and state spill response agencies. The federal agency is the **National Response Center** at **1-800-424-8802**. For state notification, call the Washington Emergency Management Division (EMD) at **1-800-258-5990** or **1-800-OILS-911** **AND** the appropriate Ecology regional office for your county (*see numbers below*). An Ecology spill responder will normally call the reporting party back to gather more information. The agency will then determine its response actions.

### Ecology Regional Spill Reporting Numbers:

- **Northwest Regional Office: (425) 649-7000** (*Island, King, Kitsap, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish & Whatcom counties*) **TDD: (425) 649-4259\***
- **Southwest Regional Office: (360) 407-6300** (*Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, Pierce, Skamania, Thurston & Wahkiakum counties*) **TDD: (360) 407-6306\***
- **Central Regional Office: (509) 575-2490** (*Benton, Chelan, Douglas, Kittitas, Klickitat, Okanogan & Yakima counties*) **TDD: (509) 454-7673\***
- **Eastern Regional Office: (509) 456-2926** (*Adams, Asotin, Columbia, Ferry, Franklin, Garfield, Grant, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, Walla Walla & Whitman counties*) **TDD: (509) 458-2055\***

*\*Note: TDD numbers answered during office hours only*

## **What type of spill information should you provide?**

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In an emergency situation, time can be critical. Detailed information about the incident may be unknown or unavailable. You can help Ecology make the best preliminary assessment of a spill report by providing:

- Name and phone number of reporting party
- Name and phone number of responsible party (who spilled?)
- Location of spill
- Type of material released
- Quantity spilled and the affected media (air, soil and/or water)
- Concentration (if known)
- Cleanup status
- Resource damage information such as dead fish or oiled birds

## **What types of actions can you expect from Ecology's spill response team?**

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Ecology deals with all reports of spills. The size, potential environmental impact, and existing or available on-site response resources all help determine the type of response action by Ecology spill responders take. For example, spill response staff could:

- Call the person back immediately to provide over-the-phone assistance;
- Take the report and pass the incident to another responsible state or local authority;
- Travel to the spill location to provide on-scene technical assistance and ensure compliance with state spill laws; or
- Take the report and choose not to respond because the reported spill poses no imminent threat to the environment and public health and cleanup will not be necessary.

## **What happens when Ecology conducts a field response?**

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When a field response is conducted, Ecology's main function is to ensure the environment and public health is being protected and cleanup actions are conducted properly. Agency responders may conduct a field response if the spiller or other local, state and federal authorities request Ecology's on-scene assistance. Ecology may initiate a field response for the following reasons:

- To determine the source of a spill and identify the responsible party;
- To investigate and identify unknown spilled materials and determine an appropriate response;
- To conduct preliminary resource damage assessments;
- To oversee cleanup operations until the emergency phase of the spill incident is past;
- To provide technical assistance to the responsible party or other responders; and/or
- When no responsible party has been identified, the state may conduct cleanup operations.

## **Cleanup**

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The spiller is responsible for cleanup and property damage and for meeting all appropriate local, state and federal cleanup requirements. If an identified spiller does not properly respond to and mitigate the spill, Ecology may conduct the cleanup and pass all costs back to the spiller.

## **For more information**

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To obtain further information about Ecology's spill response section, training activities or information about spill prevention and preparedness, please contact the Ecology regional office nearest you. You can also check our Web site at: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/spills/spills.html>

*Ecology is an equal-opportunity agency. If you have special accommodation needs, contact Mariann Cook Andrews at (360) 407-7211 (voice) or (360) 407-6006 (TDD).*